

May 29, 2007

Ms Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary Federal Communications Commission 445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W. Washington, DC 20554

Dear Ms. Dortch:

Phone: 304-596-2610

RE: Support for WV211-CC Docket #92-105

I write you in great support of WV211 and in hopes of continued and expanded funding for this critical program. We in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia are struggling with rapid growth that has outpaced infrastructure. Identification of services and service gaps is challenging. Finding and securing needed services is daunting. WV211 is proving to be the answer to addressing and quantifying these needs.

## **HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE: 2000 - 2007**

As Community Liaison for Shenandoah Valley Medical System, Inc., (SVMS) a Federally Qualified Health Center, I am acutely aware of the myriad of health and social service needs of our 27,000+ patients for whom we provide and coordinate primary health care, behavioral health care, WIC, migrant/seasonal farm workers health care, and supportive enhancement services. SVMS understands that quality of life and health is dependent upon securing comprehensive needed services. To increase access to health care and social services, SVMS in 2000 secured a highly competitive Federal Healthy Communities Access Program (HCAP) grant for nine counties in eastern West Virginia.

The 30+ HCAP Partner organizations identified the primary unmet need to be the identification of existing resources/services and development of a mechanism for people to access those services in an easy, non-fragmented, non-duplicative manner. The development of WV211 was, most unfortunately, not known to us in the Eastern Panhandle and we independently developed a nine county internet call center and database which proved to be too costly to sustain. One staff person, however, was sustained by the community to assist persons in accessing services that West Virginia Division of Health & Human Resources was unable to provide.

When our HCAP database folded, we were grateful to Lauttamus Communications, which operates the State's 211 call center, for attempting to convert our nine county data into a WV211 format to sustain an eastern WV caller-in-need linkage to services and provide a comprehensive state-wide services network. Although conversion of our data was not possible, Lauttamus Communications graciously responded to calls from the

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Eastern Panhandle utilizing our non-WV211-compatible data until we were able to fund developing a WV211 formatted database and staff to join the state-wide WV211 network.

## PRESENT PERSPECTIVE

Data is still being collected and entered into the WV211 Eastern Panhandle database. Recently, the Eastern Panhandle WV211 went "live" and persons seeking assistance are successfully being connecting with the resources they need. Because WV211 keeps information on needs met and needs requested but unable to be met, we are now able to accurately identify and quantify service gaps that we need to work on.

WV211 has already quantified the dental service gap in the Eastern Panhandle. Through a Health and Human Services Collaborative consensus process, the community had anecdotally identified the need for dental care as a high priority. From 2003 Medicaid statistics, we estimate that more than 10,000 Medicaid children in three Eastern Panhandle counties (Berkeley, Jefferson, and Morgan) do not have dental care – the worst area of the State for providing dental care for children. Caries in children is the most contagious and preventable disease in children. Oral health is disease prevention and infection control and is directly associated with overall health.

Until WV211, we had no statistics on the numbers of adults needing dental care. We now know that 48% of calls to WV211 were adults seeking dental care for themselves. The data on child and adult dental care need has galvanized the community to collaborate on addressing the unmet dental care needs of un and underinsured and uncovered insured residents of the Eastern Panhandle. A broad-based community WV Healthy Smiles Partnership has formed to provide access to oral health care and dental services for the Eastern Panhandle – "healthy smiles for a bright future."

Shenandoah Valley Medical System is a partner with WV Healthy Smile Partnership. Our mission is "...to provide the highest quality health care services to all people...endure as an advocate and leader on behalf of the health care needs of the entire community." Towards that mission, we believe that our patients need to be linked with the community services they need to become well and to stay well – such as oral health care, food, clothing, shelter, utilities, employment assistance, domestic violence support, child care assistance, etc. In 2007, we celebrate our 30th anniversary and we, also, can now celebrate that – thanks to WV211 – we have an easy-to-use and effective way to assure access to comprehensive health and social services for our patients and community.

WV211 must be sustained to save millions of dollars and enhance the lives of West Virginians, an incalculable savings. Thank you for advocating for WV211. Please feel free to contact me for any further information.

Sincerely,

Susan B. Walter Jugaland

Shenandoah Valley Medical System, Inc. Community Liaison and

Shenandoah Community Health Foundation Director